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REACTION OF L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE FRANCAISE DE L'ALBERTA TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON EDUCATION PLANNING

The French Canadian Association of Alberta wishes to support the progress recommended in the Report of the Commission on Education Planning in terms of promoting French language and culture in Alberta. The Association believes that we must, as the Report suggests, in referring to the teaching of language: "get our public priorities straight." (p. 189) and more specifically: "... French should... be next in priority to English.".

Although the position of the Report is clear when dealing with the principle of language priorities, it does not sufficiently indicate concrete means of implementing the principle. Our Association has two major recommendations to complement the Report that we feel are urgent as well as a number of other recommendations to complement these.

Consequently, the Association first recommends:

a) the teaching in French of any subject other than English in grades 1 to 12 in Alberta wherever there is a reasonable demand for it;

b) the establishment of a public corporation for both higher and continuing education in French in Alberta.

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Three general comments

The Association wants to bring to the Government's attention the statements concerning cultural identity in the section of the Report dealing with Social Forecasts. Notwithstanding the projections that "there will be a slight upgrading of values ascribed to cultural identity and cultural achievement during the next decade, particularly among native peoples and older persons of French and Ukrainian extraction. During the following two or three decades, these values will decline somewhat. Patriotism will decline steadily as a value", the Association believes that the Government of Alberta should encourage a sense of identity among French Canadians with one of the major sources of Canadian culture which is their heritage in line with the statements of the Report: "Forecasts suggest that the importance of identifications related to major divisions in Canadian society - young-old, rich-pour, red-white, French-English - will become more salient in the future." We believe that this sense of identity will provide an enrichment for society and that any tensions it may create can become healthy and fruitful with an enlightened Government. As Dr. Worth points out, "the choice between integration and assimilation must be made freely at the option of the individual. Only by keeping integration as an open alternative can there be any choice at all." (p.188)

Language learning is of very special importance to our Association. In our brief to the Commission, we indicated that the purpose of our Association is to help maintain and develop French language and culture in this province. We cannot too strongly endorse Dr. Worth's recommendation concerning languages: "the fostering of other language learning will be a major task for educators and society." "We will have to accord other language study greater status in our schools...", and particularly "the crucially important thing is that we stop playing around with language study and make it possible for children and adults to become truly fluent in the language they wish to learn - be it Cree, French, German, Japanese, Italian, Ukrainian, or whatever. The tokenism of to-day is not good enough."

The Association heartily endorses Dr. Worth's remark to the effect that, "the cultural context of each language is important if that language is to have a living basis." This principle has led us to believe that a strong extra-curricular program in which French is used as a language of communication in those areas that have particular relevance to French culture: for example, music, drama, public-speaking groups, sports and other activities in which French can usefully be used as a language of communication, must be made possible for all students desirous of truly becoming fluent in Canada's two official languages.

I. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS - Early Childhood Education

Recommendation No.1: Public support should be provided immediately for French early education in areas where there is a clear need, for example: Edmonton, Calgary, St-Paul, Bonnyville, the Peace-River, Morinville, Legal, St-Albert, etc.

Recommendation No.2: It is essential to provide public support eventually for all five year old children desirous of guided learning in the French language, throughout the province.

- It has been well established that children from infancy till the age of 12 approximately have great facility in language learning. (Report p.189) This facility should not be ignored. If children are provided with good French pre-school programs, they can move directly into a bilingual program in Grade One and develop fluency and mastery of Canada's two official languages. On the other hand, it is extremely difficulty to develop early fluency in the language without kindergarten.

- Mastery of French must become part of programs in day care centers inasmuch as the total environment in Alberta is pervasively English and provides no other support to efforts of parents in the home. Because of this lack of support, very young children tend to become unilingual even when French is used regularly by the parents in the home.

Recommendation No.3: The Department of Education should provide the special services in French normally provided English students in Alberta.

- For example, the Department of Education has recently announced support for a pilot project in the Peace-River area to help with classroom based treatment to children with learning disabilities; we feel that in this area the members of the travelling learning therapists must be in a situation to provide help to students in French schools. By special efforts in recruiting bilingual specialists, such services could be provided without prohibitive costs.

- Handicapped children who are French-speaking or who wish to become so must also be provided with special programs to allow them to pursue their education, without sacrificing their aspirations to become fluent in French.

Recommendation No.4: Financial support must be made available immediately to prepare teachers for early childhood education in French through accredited University courses and special workshops.

- We have been informed through the media that the Federal Government is placing bursaries at the disposal of Provinces for second language teachers. These might be made available to help teachers in becoming familiar with the most recent methods of teaching, and with the new resources becoming available for early childhood education in French.
- Collège Universitaire St-Jean has already begun introducing method courses for teachers who will be teaching the language arts to French speaking students. These courses should be strengthened and developed.

II. BASIC EDUCATION

Recommendation No.5: Where French is used as the language of instruction, it should become the language of instruction for any courses except English from grades one to twelve.

- This is a major recommendation of our Association as mentioned in the opening remarks of this brief.
- We cannot emphasize too much that all our experience in the teaching of French in Alberta suggests that students' knowledge both written and oral of English does not suffer in Alberta even when all courses other than English Language, Arts and Literature are taught in French. Many members of our Association have had a long experience of private schools where this was the case, and the ability of students attending these institutions in terms of their knowledge of English was comparable when not better than those of equivalent students in English speaking institutions. The most experienced members of our Association have come to the conclusion that bilingualism in the schools which means 50% in English and 50% in French is insufficient to attain the desired ends of producing bilingual graduates.

Recommendation No.6: A deliberate policy of planned differentiation should be undertaken in order to render schools where French is the language of instruction accessible to students of both Separate and Public Systems.

- Our experience suggests that there is an increasing interest among Non-catholic Residents of Alberta in bilingual education; inasmuch as there is not usually a sufficient population to justify the existence of two schools in one area in which French is the language of instruction, we believe that there is a necessity to provide some way by which students of the two Systems in Alberta can profit by these special schools.

Recommendation No.7: When the only possibility of having French as a language of instruction requires that the program be part of the school in which there are also unilingual (English) programs, all teachers and support staff should be fluent in French.

- English is so pervasive in all parts of Alberta, that as soon as there are even a very small number of students or staff in an educational institution who do not speak French, English becomes the exclusive language of communication outside one or two specialised areas; this, in our view, defeats the purpose of establishing schools in which French is used as the language of instruction. The Government might encourage Boards to recognize this dimension and provide Bursaries or other forms of support to Boards that seek to recognize this need.

Recommendation No.8: A special certification should be required from teachers before they can enter bilingual schools, or schools in which French is the language of instruction.

- Special certification is perhaps not the only means, but we feel that some strong measures are required inasmuch as teachers require special training before entering schools in which French is used as a language of instruction.

Recommendation No.9: The necessary means to promote French culture in schools where French is the language of instruction must be provided to such schools.

- We are convinced that federal support would be available in order to enhance the extra-curricular environment of schools where French is the language of instruction.
- Unless there is a substantial amount of cultural activities in which French is the language of communication outside a formal classroom situation, there is only a very reduced possibility of French becoming a living language for the students. Dr. Worth recognizes the need to incorporate cultural reality in teaching a language. It is our belief that a number of enriching but extra-curricular activities can take place in French in and around bilingual school programs. These would be in addition to including strictly academic study of the culture.

Recommendation No.10: The Government should immediately appoint a Task Force to study how education in French can be provided to students in areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary.

- The Association wishes to recommend the efforts of the Edmonton Separate School Board in developing a bilingual high school and several bilingual feeder schools at the elementary level. Although there remain a number of problems, it is our belief that the continuing high level of leadership that has been manifest in the Edmonton Separate will solve these problems. It is our belief that a school such as J.H. Picard and a few elementary feeder schools might usefully be developed in Calgary.
- Rural areas, however, must face very different problems. The very limited amount of time allotted for reactions to the Report has not allowed us to develop creative solutions to many of these problems. However, the Association would be most happy to cooperate as effectively as possible with the Government in finding solutions.

Recommendation No.11: The Department of Education should substantially strengthen its curriculum division responsible for French as a subject of study and as a language of instruction.

- The Association would like to commend the Department of Education for the fine work that Dr. Lamoureux has accomplished in developing French education in Alberta. We must, however, point out the fact that Dr. Lamoureux's office is understaffed if he is to meet the existing needs. It is our understanding that he is responsible for programs in which languages other than French are used as a language of instruction. (Ukrainian and Native Languages)

- In our view, research and leadership in solving the problems specific to education in French must be forthcoming from the Department of Education as local school Boards can only rarely provide the resources that will create this leadership. Among other problems, there is a need for example to produce pedagogical materials that reflect the basic programs in Alberta but that are not simple translations in that they will reflect the real cultural differences.

- A partial solution to these problems might come from joint appointments to the Department of Education and to the staff of Collège Universitaire Saint-Jean or/and to School Boards in the Province.

Recommendation No.12: The Government of Alberta should establish a board (public corporation) for higher and continuing education in the French language for Alberta.

- cf. Appendix No.1

Recommendation No.13: The Government should adopt a creative role in negotiations with the Federal Government in obtaining support for French education in Alberta.

- The Government of Canada has adopted many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and has announced a number of support programs for provincial systems of education. It is our hope that the Government of Alberta will act quickly not only in obtaining Federal funds that have already been

allocated but also in requesting the establishment of new Federal programs that might be better tailored to meet the needs in Alberta.

- Our Association believes that the Government of Alberta should move quickly on such support programs as the teacher education program, (Raynauld Committee) language learning centers, summer language programs and Bursaries. In our view, it would be regrettable if the citizens of this province should not benefit in a manner equitable with that of other Canadian citizens from Federal programs.

Recommendation No.14: The Government must provide services in French through Access.

- French speaking families and children in families where there is a strong desire to have the children speak French require the same services from Access as do the other youngsters in the province. This is particularly important in terms of early childhood and continuing education to reach those people that have less access to major institutions than do most citizens. Ways in which CBXFT, Collège St-Jean, and Access might cooperate to develop these programs inexpensively should be explored.

APPENDIX I

Dr. Worth's Report recommends that the people of Alberta continue to support University education and extend growing support to new trends in higher education (technical institutes, community colleges) and particularly to continuing education. L'A.C.F.A. supports this position and wishes to endorse it strongly. However, l'A.C.F.A. is particularly concerned about the teaching of French and in French at these levels.

Our Association has a long history of involvement in French higher education in Alberta. This involvement has expressed itself since 1940 by our official endorsement of le Collège Saint-Jean d'Edmonton. With our help, le Collège Saint-Jean has established a strong base of support among the French speaking population and more recently has begun to attract a following among the English speaking members of Alberta who wish to develop as functionally bilingual citizens. To serve this purpose, le Collège was incorporated as a private college in 1961 and operated as a private junior college affiliated with the University of Alberta. In 1970, the Collège and the University of Alberta jointly established the Collège Universitaire Saint-Jean as an integral part of the University to provide for University education in a predominantly French environment. This arrangement has proved to be very satisfactory to our Association and in our view the Government of Alberta should continue to support the University in this endeavour.

Unfortunately, the Association and le Collège Saint-Jean have not as yet been successful in their attempts to provide other forms of higher education in French to the population they have been called upon to serve. It is our recommendation that the Campus of le Collège Saint-Jean should group not only University students, but students in several post-secondary non University programs. There is no reason why students in University programs shouldn't share the same campus and extra-curricular activities in French with students in College programs, others in Technical programs and students in continuing education. We believe that a milieu or environment in which French is used as a language of communication outside classroom situations is very important. This principle was central to the establishment of Collège Universitaire and should be extended to non-university programs.

*between 1960 and 70.

NEED OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

French post-secondary education in Alberta developed almost exclusively in the private sector and for a long period of time without any public support.(1) The time has come when a bilingual program at the post-secondary level requires full public support for viability. More specifically, there should be public ownership of the buildings used. For example, the present contract which established Collège Universitaire Saint-Jean works hardship on the University of Alberta that must find in its operating grants funds to rent the facilities at Collège Saint-Jean, and also on le Collège Saint-Jean that must accept a reduced rental as its only source of funds for funding its buildings and capital projects. These financial considerations have handicapped the development of le Collège Saint-Jean in areas outside the University program. Financial survival in meeting its responsibilities toward the University have absorbed almost all the energies of le Collège Saint-Jean.(2)

STRUCTURE

The Worth Report in our view recommends structures for education in which a Crown corporation responsible for all areas of bilingual higher and continuing education might well be established and be responsible directly to the Department of Higher Education. This Corporation might be called the Institute on Bilingualism. The creation of this Institute was recommended by the University of Alberta to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The Act creating the Institute might specify that all programs credited towards degrees or certificates offered by Alberta's major Institutions (Universities, Colleges and Technical Institutes) would be offered by the Institute in close coordination with these Institutions in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. In a similar manner, the Institute could cooperate closely with the Alberta Academy and ACCESS in designing and preparing individualized instruction in French for people outside Edmonton. In order to ensure close liaison between this Institute and the population, members of the Board of Directors should be selected from candidates presented by our Association.

Note (1) This was partly possible because of a close association between French and catholicism. This association had serious drawbacks and no longer appears tenable for the future. The B. & B. Commission recommended a clear dissociation between religious education and bilingualism.

Note (2) This situation is all the more anomalous now that the Federal Government will spend substantial funds in assisting the provinces that are prepared to support bilingual higher education.

LOCATION

While not directly involved, the Association feels that the Board should acquire from the present owners, the campus, buildings and chattels of le Collège Saint-Jean d'Edmonton. Its location is sufficiently central and its buildings well designed to meet the needs of the present time.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INSTITUTE

The major responsibility of the Institute would be to coordinate the activities of staff and students in creating a dynamic and vibrant French speaking community.

RESEARCH AND LANGUAGE CENTER

The Institute should encompass a center for research and facilities for the teaching of French particularly for people who desire to promote their own professional and personal interests by acquiring fluency in French.(1) The presence of a substantial number of students and staff on the same campus who use French as a regular language of communication would enhance such a language program. It is our belief that some of the Research program recommended by the Royal Commission on B & B might well be done through the resources of the proposed Institute. With the active support of the Government of Alberta, most of the costs of this research could be obtained from the Government of Canada.

RESOURCE CENTER

The present Library and Teaching Resource facilities (films, video-tapes, packaged learning, etc.) at Collège Saint-Jean should be developed as a major centre of learning resources for the Province.

Note (1) This center would be equipped with complete audio-visual linguistic technology for the teaching of French and for research into the problems of second language acquisition. Facilities for such a center already exist within the buildings of le Collège Saint-Jean but plans to improve and extend these facilities should be approved rapidly by the Provincial Government.

FRENCH-CANADIAN STUDIES

The Institute would work closely with Collège Universitaire in developing a strong program in French Canadian studies as recommended by Dr. Worth. The resources of this program would then become available for University students, College students and the general public. Particular emphasis would be placed on the relationships of French Canada with the rest of the country and on the peculiar problems of bilingualism and biculturalism. If French as a language is to receive special emphasis in Alberta, surely an understanding of the French reality in Canada must be stressed within our educational system.(1)

BURSARIES

Alberta's French population is quite widely dispersed in the northern part of the province. It is our belief that the Government has a responsibility to assist these people in overcoming the geographical handicaps their location engenders in terms of educational possibilities. To this effect, travel bursaries from diverse parts of the province should be made available to students withing to attend a truly bilingual program. There is not sufficient demand to justify the existence of more than one strong post-secondary institution as described, but support for travel would substantially overcome these handicaps.(2)

SPECIAL FINANCIAL HELP

Dr. Worth takes note of the legislation in Alberta that allows the use of French as a language of instruction. The B & B Commission recognized the need of special programs to prepare teachers to do this and recommended Federal assistance for such programs. Members of our Association

Note (1) The section on Social Forecasts underlines the danger of increased tension between large groups in our society. Substantial investments now in creating a pool of knowledge about the French reality of Canada can contribute a great deal to fostering good French-English relations.

Note (2) There does not appear to be any obstacle in extending this support to English speaking students capable and desirous of becoming fluent in French and English.

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